

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

Although I had heard approval of the Hughes/EchoStar merger was doubtful, I am still extremely disappointed. I DO understand some of the concerns, especially regarding the loss of competition in those areas not served by cable. It just seems absurd to assume that the merged company would create a two tiered system to gouge folks who cannot get cable.

For the majority of us, the cable companies have had us over a barrel for years. Before there was a choice, the programming, customer service, and pricing were outlandishly awful. The merger would undeniably expand the availability of a choice to many more individuals than the group you are concerned about possibly being hurt by the merger.

In their words: 'The combined company will be a much stronger competitor to cable operators by offering local TV channels via satellite in every market in the United States. In addition, the merger will ensure that affordable high-speed Internet access service via satellite is available to Americans nationwide.'

I do not think this is hype. The benefit is certain, the concerns only possible, and remotely at that. At the least, open it up for more debate.

And on a final note, the idea of letting a content provider, especially R. Murdoch, gain control of this means of distribution seems far scarier.

Sincerely,

Drew LaStella
47 Round Hill Rd.
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522